

VZCZCXYZ0071  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLC #0216/01 0951633  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 051633Z APR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8947  
INFO RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA PRIORITY 0344  
RUEHKI/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY 1250  
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY 0631  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0286  
RUEHLU/AMEMBASSY LUANDA PRIORITY 0896  
RUEHNP/AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA PRIORITY 0371  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0778  
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE PRIORITY 0615  
RUFNGOA/HQ USEUCOM VAHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/COMUSNAVEUR NAPLES IT PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 000216

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

KINSHASA ALSO FOR BRAZZAVILLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/05/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TP](#) [GB](#)

SUBJECT: SAO TOME PARTIES JOCKEYING TO FORM GOVERNMENT

REF: LIBREVILLE 200

Classified By: Ambassador Barrie Walkley for reasons 1.4 b and d.

11. (C) Summary: Legislative elections in Sao Tome and Principe (STP) gave no party a majority of seats in the National Assembly (an institution that has much more power constitutionally than the Presidency). President de Menezes's MDFM party won the most seats, with 23 out of 55. De Menezes hopes to form a government by persuading Patrice Trovoada's ADI (in third place with 12 seats) either to support or abstain when the MDFM presents its program to the National Assembly. The second biggest vote getter, Posser da Costa's MLSTP (19 seats), and the ADI are also negotiating to create a majority coalition. Even if those two parties reach an agreement, however, de Menezes told Ambassador Walkley he interprets the constitution as allowing him to propose his own MDFM government -- and to call new elections if it is rejected by any MLSTP-ADI coalition. Unless de Menezes wins Trovoada over, or changes his own mind, STP could be headed for more political turmoil. End summary.

12. (U) The results of the legislative elections held in Sao Tome and Principe on March 26 and on April 2 are now in, with President Fradique de Menezes's MDFM taking 23 seats, Prime Minister Maria do Carmo Silveira's MLSTP winning 19 seats, Patrice Trovoada's ADI garnering 12 seats and Jao Gomes's Novo Rumo capturing 1 seat. As 28 seats are needed to form a governing majority in the 55-seat National Assembly, Patrice Trovoada becomes the "king-maker," currently assessing offers from both the MLSTP and the MDFM. The election results will become official once they are certified by the Supreme Court.

13. (U) STP legislative elections are significant. Unlike many African countries -- where there is generally a strong presidency and a weak legislature -- power in Sao Tome and Principe (STP) is vested in the National Assembly. Under agreements ending a dispute in 2003, the next president's position will be further diminished: he/she will lose the right to select the minister of defense and minister of foreign affairs (all ministers will be selected by the prime minister), will not preside over cabinet meetings and will no longer have the authority to dismiss parliament. Presidential elections are anticipated in July, 2006.

14. (C) Last week, once it became clear that no party was going to win a majority in parliament, the Ambassador met

separately in Sao Tome with President de Menezes, Patrice Trovoadá and Posser da Costa (the actual president of the MLSTP) to discuss the situation. De Menezes said that under no conditions will he enter into any coalition or power-sharing agreement with Posser da Costa ("other members of the MLSTP, perhaps, but not Posser da Costa"). His preferred plan is to attempt to control the legislature as a "relative majority" party, which requires the assistance -- or at least the acquiescence -- of Patrice Trovoadá. De Menezes thus called Gabon's President Omar Bongo, with whom he is on good terms, and asked Bongo to influence Trovoadá's thinking (Patrice Trovoadá was born in Libreville and grew up in Gabon, from where -- at the time -- his father was leading the struggle for STP's independence from Portugal). On March 28, Bongo sent a plane to transport Trovoadá to Libreville and two days later sent another one to pick up de Menezes so that the three could meet. However, de Menezes and Trovoadá returned to STP apparently without any agreement having been reached.

15. (C) In a meeting that took place before the trip to Libreville, Patrice Trovoadá told the Ambassador that he had hoped to win 14 seats in the elections but was satisfied to have taken 12. He said he is open to offers from both the MLSTP and the MDFM but "temperamentally" feels closer to Posser da Costa than to de Menezes (he was de Menezes's advisor on oil affairs until he was fired last year; he was also in an informal alliance with the MLSTP in parliament). Trovoadá said he expected de Menezes to try everything to secure his support, even offering him the prime minister job. However, Trovoadá stressed, he is more interested in having his ADI campaign program accepted publicly as the program of the government than he is in any job or "division of the spoils." Trovoadá explained that he sees these elections as a stepping stone to the next legislative elections (in four years), which he hopes to win.

16. (U) In a radio interview on April 4, Trovoadá claimed to be no longer in negotiations with de Menezes because of "a lack of flexibility" on the part of the MDFM. He said that the MDFM has drafted a government program which the ADI cannot support. He made no mention of the MLSTP in his interview.

17. (C) Posser da Costa, when the Ambassador met him the day after the elections, was exhausted. (Although Maria do Carmo Silveira is the Prime Minister in the about-to-depart MLSTP government, Posser da Costa is the president of the MLSTP; it is expected that Silveira will now return to her old job as head of the Central Bank). Da Costa attributed the MLSTP's election loss to a lack of financial support from traditional supporters China and Angola, which dramatically limited MLSTP campaign capabilities, while, he claimed, Taiwan and Nigeria were pouring money into MDFM coffers and Patrice Trovoadá was receiving big money from Nigerian oil interests. "Everyone thought we were loaded, but we had no money," Da Costa said, adding that Beijing gave the MLSTP only \$40,000, "peanuts compared to what Taiwan was handing out to de Menezes and the MDFM." Da Costa revealed that he and other top MDFM leaders had been forced to mortgage their houses to finance the campaign. (Note: Lots of foreign exchange arrived in the country during the campaign; IMF figures indicate that inflation rose by at least 6% during the month. End Note.)

18. (C) Posser da Costa said that the MLSTP will accept the election results and that he plans to call a party congress in the next month or so to elect a new leadership. He continues to seek ways to establish a coalition government with Patrice Trovoadá's ADI and would like to be the next Prime Minister (a development which would be strenuously opposed by de Menezes). If that coalition is not possible, the MLSTP will serve as a "responsible but aggressive" opposition party.

19. (C) Meanwhile, President de Menezes is behaving as if his MDFM party has the right to form a government on the basis of its plurality. He has established a government plan and is getting ready to name a Prime Minister and cabinet. Assuming

he carries out this intention, the test will come once the new parliament is in session. The MDFM government will deliver its plan to parliament (the plan is essentially the government's roadmap for the next four years); if a majority of the 55 members accepts the plan, then the government is in place.

¶10. (C) The key questions are: How will de Menezes and the MDFM secure at least 28 votes when the party has only 23 seats; and What will be the result if the program does not win approval by a majority of legislators? The answers to these questions depend, in part, on an interpretation of the constitution. The constitution, for example, is unclear what will happen if there is no absolute majority in favor of the program, due to abstentions, but the plan is not rejected (in other words, if 23 vote for, 20 against and 12 abstain; there will be no majority but there will be more votes for than against). The government might be able to muddle along (if it does not suffer a "no confidence" motion). If, however, the ADI joins the MLSTP in a coalition and votes against the MDFM plan in the Assembly, the MDFM government will fall. What happens next is unclear, although President de Menezes appears to think he could call for new elections, blaming the ADI and MLSTP for the problem. Such an action would almost certainly provoke constitutional challenges and assure political turmoil until after the Presidential election in July.

¶11. (U) Relevant portions of the STP constitution, informally translated, include:

Article 110: The Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President of the Republic after taking into account the opinion of the parties represented in the National Assembly and with due regard for the results of the general election.

Article 116: The Government's Program will be submitted for the approval of the National Assembly...within thirty days after appointment.

Article 117: The dismissal of the government occurs when:

.....  
d) Its program is rejected;  
e) A motion of confidence is not passed;  
...

Article 103:

...  
2) The National Assembly cannot be dissolved in the first twelve months after its elections, in the last six months of the President's mandate, or during a state of siege or a state of emergency.

WALKLEY